women news

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women - in the family, the work place and society - has until recently been ignored as a major issue. Now emerging in publicity, it has become a matter of utmost concern and it is apparent that its dimensions are far greater than previously conjectured. On the recommendation of the Commission on the Status of Women (at its thirty-fifth session), the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1991/18 of 30 May 1991, urged Member States to adopt, strengthen and enforce legislation prohibiting violence against women and to take all appropriate administrative, social and educational measures to protect women from all forms of physical or mental violence. The same resolution recommended also that a framework for an international instrument be developed that would explicitly address the issue.

In November 1991, as a result of extrabudgetary contributions from the Government of Canada as well as the Governments of Australia and the Netherlands, 14 experts were convened, including members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on Crime Prevention and Control, to consider the type of international instrument that should deal with the issue of violence, the substantive elements of such an instrument, the definition of the concept of violence and the measures to prevent it.

The experts recommended that a draft declaration on violence against women should be considered by the Commission on the Status of Women, at its thirty-sixth session to be held in Vienna from 11 to 20 March 1992, for the purpose of submitting it to the General Assembly for immediate adoption. They also recommended that it should be presented to bodies and organs of the United Nations that are working directly or indirectly on violence against women, which should be encouraged to accelerate their work to help put violence against women on the mainstream human rights agenda.

In the draft declaration, violence is defined as any act, omission, controlling behaviour or threat, in any sphere, which results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological injury to women. Violence against women is understood to encompass, but not be limited to:

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including wife battering, incest, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female circumcision, non-spousal violence, financial discrimination and exploitation;

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation in the workplace, trafficking in women and forced prostitution and degrading representation of women in the media;

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State wherever it occurs.

The draft declaration defines violence against women; lists the rights that are to be protected; and outlines the responsibilities of States and international organizations. A future issue of *Women 2000* will present the subject in more detail, after the Commission has considered it.

Declaration adopted for Andean region

A Declaration on Violence against Women as a development priority was issued by the participants of the Strategic Planning Conference for the Andean Region held by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) at Quito in October 1991. The Conference brought together high-level representatives from Governments, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations system from five Andean countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela) to provide recommendations to UNIFEM for the preparation of the Andean Strategy 1992-1993. The Declaration reads as follows:

"The participants at the Strategic Planning Conference for the Andean Region of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), meeting at Quito from 29 October to 1 November 1991, at the invitation of UNIFEM,

"Consider that there is an evident growing awareness among the Governments of the region, the non-governmental organizations in the countries concerned

and some multilateral bodies, such as the Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, of the need to focus attention on the problem of violence against women;

"Recognize that violence against women is a universally acknowledged problem and that, in Latin America and the Caribbean and, above all, in the Andean region, it is one of the most serious obstacles to the enhancement of the living conditions and participation of women;

"Draw attention to the fact that acts of violence against women are a clear violation of basic human rights;

"Affirm their determination to combat violence against women systematically on the basis of their own experiences;

"Point out that it is inconsistent with the objectives of UNIFEM that it should not devote more of its cooperation capability to supporting countries in this matter;

"Recommend to the authorities of UNIFEM and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and other competent United Nations authorities the inclusion in their programmes of efforts to combat violence against women."

WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

At each session held since 1987, the Commission on the Status of Women has considered reports on the three priority themes of equality, development and peace. In preparation for discussions on the priority theme of development at the thirty-sixth session of the Commission, a seminar on the integration of women into development was held at Vienna from 9 to 11 December 1991.

Efforts to integrate women into development have been under way for many years and it was therefore considered to be time to review their strengths and weaknesses and to suggest future orientations. The seminar brought together a select number of specialists and attracted a strong participation of Member States, bodies and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, research institutes and universities, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The high level of interest was an expression of the need to examine and reconsider the concept of women in development (WID).

The participants suggested introducing systematic analyses disaggregated by gender and Government accountability and pointed to the need to take into account the entire course of women's lives, from birth until death. The fundamental role of women in a range of roles essential to the survival and the development of society was recognized. The findings of the seminar are expected to influence the content of the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, which will be held in 1995.

Papers by Diane Elson (University of Manchester, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), on gender issues in development, and Mary B. Anderson (UNIFEM), analysing the operational experiences of UNIFEM and UNDP in integrating women into development during the period 1970-1991, set the tone for the seminar. Neuma Aguiar (Brazil), Peggy Antrobus (Barbados), Nüket Kardam (Turkey), Marnia Lazreg (Algeria), Marjorie Jane Mblinyi (United Republic of Tanzania) and Ruth Meena (Zimbabwe) contributed provocative "think pieces" and participated as experts.

While the important role that women play in development has been widely recognized by donor countries and organizations of the United Nations system, many obstacles still exist. Women are prevented from making a productive contribution and fully developing their potential, whereas in the reproductive area of caring and nurturing, for instance, they overcontribute. Although most donor countries have set up WID units and have adopted formal mandates regarding women's participation in development, there has been little measurement of output and impact. Furthermore, lack of funding and shortage of staff are still major constraints. Changing the attitude towards WID issues among the predominantly male staff of development agencies has proved to be a slow process. Despite the increasing number of WID units and focal points in organizations of the United Nations system, many of them have other professional duties as well, which is an apparent drawback to their effectiveness. Interviews indicate that United Nations personnel, for instance, still lack sufficient awareness of gender issues, owing to a lack of staff training.

During discussions in the seminar, the programmatic and innovative efforts of the WID concept were appraised, but substantive criticism was also expressed. A central one was that WID, as a project- and programme-focused approach, has not addressed the implications that development policies have for women in the fields of trade, foreign investment, prices, credit, land reform and nationalization. WID has not sought to influence the key ministries involved in the formulation of overall development strategies, such as planning

commissions, finance ministries and ministries for trade and industry. Instead, emphasis has been put on the ministries that allocate resources such as those for rural development, health and education. WID agencies have not equipped women to play a role in decision-making processes. Skills in advocacy and auditing and an understanding of economics have not been developed. Officials of agencies concerned with development strategies have not been sufficiently trained to understand and apply gender-sensitive approaches. WID officers have been given symbolic authority without power. In some cases, formal measures have been taken to satisfy the request of donor agencies. In the absence of genuine political will, the impact is reduced at the national level.

Deliberations during the seminar made it clear that so-called "women's issues" are in reality "gender issues", which should not be of interest only to women. Gender refers to socially constructed and culturally variable roles that women and men play in their daily lives. Gender refers to a structural relationship of inequality between men and women. It is manifested in labour markets and in political structures as well as in the household and is reinforced by custom, law and specific development policies.

The situation and role of women cannot be understood in isolation from those of men and can not be detached from a reflection on the overall social, cultural and economic structures in which societies operate. Inequalities are closely determined by the type of development pursued by society. The extent to which women are able to take advantage of new opportunities and to transform those into true power over their lives and their societies also depends on the development strategy. So-called women's issues are linked to macro- and micro-processes and institutions in the State and the economy.

A necessary step forward is to make the status of women a primary indicator of development. Issues of the *Human Development Report* for 1990 and 1991 point to the importance of integrating quality of life into, and as a component part of, development.[1] There is a new emphasis on human resource development and poverty-focused strategies. Issues of democratization and accountability are of concern, given the global shortage of savings to fund development, the debt crisis and environmental problems. Participants in the seminar suggested that donors and development agencies, as well as recipients, should develop binding procedures to ensure that WID activities could be monitored and evaluated. Accountability also means a strengthening of lobbying and advocacy skills among women's movements and non-governmental organizations. They should critically follow the institutions responsible for implementing development and WID policies.

Democratization, human resource development and empowerment are closely interlinked. The self-empowerment of women is a key issue. Women can only participate in the process of democratization to the extent that their human rights are recognized by themselves, by men and by society itself. A further precondition is the development of their human potential and empowerment. Women and men, therefore, have to know their rights and claim them at all levels of society. Empowerment means that women gain autonomy and can decide on their own lives. It includes their being fully involved in all economic, political and social decision-making processes. In the past, many women's projects did not empower women and often did not provide them with basic life skills, including those of leadership; or empowerment was not possible within the framework in which the project operated. Although women learned how to cope with socio-economic problems and marginally improved their economic status, they did not become empowered to control their lives. Moreover, empowerment cannot take place unless women's primary responsibility for the reproduction of the family is either compensated for or shared equally not only with men, but just as importantly with community and society. Reproduction is not a function for the benefit of the individual but for the benefit of all.

A redefinition of gender issues in development will need to include a new alliance of gender-sensitive donor agencies and development practitioners in donor and recipient countries, as well as third world women's organizations. The participants stressed that non-governmental organizations can play an important role in constructing new types of international relations. As regards forthcoming issues, that of the environment is currently on the international agenda; there is an international consensus that the environment is globally relevant and important. Linked to that issue is the concept of sustainable development, which means a development that is in harmony with nature and that stresses self-sufficiency, especially from a long-term perspective. A number of women's non-governmental organizations and researchers are calling for another or alternative form of development. They argue that the set-backs to women resulting from the structural adjustment policies can be used as a starting-point for considering the need for an alternative analysis, a new paradigm in development. Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), a third-world feminist network founded in 1984 by a group of researchers, activists and policy makers concerned with women's

participation in the development process, will be working over the next three years on a global analysis of the issues of environment, reproductive rights and population, and alternative economic frameworks.

The full text of the conclusions and recommendations of the seminar will be before the Commission on the Status of Women and is available from the Division for the Advancement of Women in the six official languages of the United Nations.

ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

The eleventh session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women will be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 20 to 31 January 1992. The Committee will review the reports of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the implementation of article 6 of the Convention, and consider the report of the Expert Group Meeting on Violence against Women (see the first article of the present issue), and possible recommendations relating to development assistance and the informal sector.

The Committee, composed of 23 experts serving in their individual capacities, is responsible for reviewing the periodic reports of countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention and making general recommendations. At the eleventh session, the initial reports of Barbados, Ghana and Honduras, the second periodic reports of China, Czechoslovakia, El Salvador, Honduras, Spain, Sri Lanka and Venezuela, and the third periodic report of Honduras will be considered.

The Committee also reviews and comments on specific articles of the Convention. At its 1992 session, it will review article 6, which deals with all forms of traffic in women, and articles 2, 5, 11, 12 and 16 related to violence towards women and the sexual harassment and exploitation of women. The Committee will have before it a report by the Secretariat (CEDAW/C/1992/4) analysing information provided by Governments on this subject. All reports prepared for the Committee are widely distributed and are available to United Nations depository libraries and information centres.

The Committee will also consider possible recommendations about official development assistance. A report prepared by the Secretariat (CEDAW/C/1992/5) notes that while the Convention does not mention development assistance *per se*, most of the countries that are donors of such assistance are parties to the Convention and therefore it could be assumed that they would ensure that WID was part of official development assistance. It notes further that most of the donor countries give priority to WID.

In terms of the informal sector, the report prepared by the Secretariat (CEDAW/C/1992/6) notes that there are different approaches to defining the concept. It also notes that the informal sector is characterized by a lack of regulation, inadequate levels of income and little social protection for most workers. While there is discrimination against women in this sector where they are overrepresented, regulation might impair the flexibility currently found in it and which has made women's participation possible. Innovative approaches to extend social protection to the informal sector have to be explored, therefore.

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On the basis of discussions at its forty-sixth session in its Third (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Questions) Committee, the General Assembly adopted four resolutions on issues related to the advancement of women. The main resolution on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (Assembly resolution 46/98) called upon Member States to give priority to policies and programmes relating to employment, health and education, in particular literacy, for the empowerment of women, especially those in the rural areas. It requested the Commission on the Status of Women, when considering the priority theme related to development at its thirty-sixth and subsequent sessions, to ensure its early contribution to the work of forthcoming major international conferences, and to give special attention to women in developing countries, particularly in Africa and the least developed countries. It called upon Member States to establish specific targets at each level in order to increase the participation of women in professional, management and decision-making positions in their countries. It urged that particular attention be given by the United Nations and Governments to the situation of women with disabilities and to refugee women and children and migrant women. It requested Governments to give priority to women when presenting candidatures for vacancies in the United Nations Secretariat, and requested the Secretary-General to give special consideration to female candidates from underrepresented and unrepresented developing countries to fill vacancies at the decision-making level.

The tenor of the latter requests was echoed in a separate resolution on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (Assembly resolution 46/

100). The other two resolutions were on the United Nations Development Fund for Women (Assembly resolution 46/97) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (Assembly resolution 46/99).

Based on the discussions of the Second Committee (Economic and Financial Questions), a resolution on women, environment, population and sustainable development (Assembly resolution 46/167) was adopted by the General Assembly requesting the Commission on the Status of Women to make the results of its discussion, at its thirty-sixth session, on women and the environment available to the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development at its fourth session.

Calendar of meetings 1992

January

***Population Division, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs**: Expert Group Meeting on Population, Environment and Development, New York, 20-24 January*

***Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**, eleventh session, New York, 20-31 January*

February

***IFAD**: Summit on the Economic Advancement of Rural Women, Geneva, 25-26 February*

***ESCAP**: Pacific Subregional Workshop on the Technical Processing of Information Concerning Women in Development, Suva (two weeks)*

March

NGO Consultation on Preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women, Vienna, 9-10 March

***Commission on the Status of Women**, thirty-sixth session, Vienna, 11-20 March*

***World Bank**: Meeting of Partners for Safe Motherhood, Washington, D.C., 10-12 March*

***ESCAP**: Malaysia National Workshop on a Legal Literacy Programme for Women, Kuala Lumpur (two days)*

***ESCAP**: Nepal National Workshop on a Legal Literacy Programme for Women, Kathmandu (two days)*

Second quarter

***ECA**: XIIIth Meeting of the Africa Regional Coordinating Committee on the Integration of Women in Development, Addis Ababa.*

***ESCAP**: Inter-agency meeting on Women in Development, Bangkok (one day)*

April

***Division for the Advancement of Women**: Subregional Seminar on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Antigua, 6-10 April*

***ECE**: Work Session on Statistics on Women, Geneva, 27-29 April*

***Population Division, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs**: Expert Group Meeting on Population Policies and Programmes, Cairo*

***ESCAP**: Papua New Guinea National Workshop on a Legal Literacy Programme for Women, Port Moresby (two days)*

***ESCAP**: Pakistan National Workshop on a Legal Literacy Programme for Women, Islamabad (two days)*

May

***Division for the Advancement of Women**: Expert Group Meeting on Increased Awareness by Women of Their Rights, including Legal Literacy, Bratislava, 18-22 May*

***WHO**: 45th World Health Assembly: Technical Discussions on Women: Health and Development, Geneva.*

June

***Population Division, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs**: Expert Group Meeting on Population and Women, Gaborone, 22-24 June*

***UNU/World Institute for Development Economics Research**: Research Conference on Development and Patriarchy, Helsinki*

Third quarter

***ECA**: Training Seminar on Planning, Mainstreaming and Evaluation for Women Leaders from French-speaking Countries, Addis Ababa*

August

***Centre Against Apartheid, Department of Political and Security Council Affairs**: International Day of Solidarity with the Struggle of Women in South Africa, 9 August*

October

***Population Division, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs**: Expert Group Meeting on Family Planning, Health and Family Well-being, Bangalore*

November

***Division for the Advancement of Women**: Seminar on Women in Extreme Poverty, Vienna, 9-13 November*

***ECE**: Work Session on Fertility Surveys, Geneva, 16-18 November*

***Population Division, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs**: Expert Group Meeting on Population Growth and Demographic Structure, Paris*

No information available on dates

UNFPA: Round Table on Women and Development, Chad; International Women's Day Seminars and Women in Development Network Meetings, Bangladesh; Workshop on Women, Population and Development, National Training Workshop on Family Planning and Communication Skills and Seminar on Implications of Population Factors in Development of Women, Fiji; Consultation on Family Planning Programme, including Consultation on Norplant and Working Women's Forum, India; Seminar on Strengthening Women's Participation in Development, Malaysia; Workshop for Women Leaders on Programme Review and Strategy Development Exercise on Women, Population and Development, Papua New Guinea

***UNU/World Institute for Development Economics Research**: Preliminary Meeting on Women and Development in the Muslim World, Helsinki*

UNESCO: Training seminar on themes still to be defined, Romania; International Symposium on Women and Political Movements in Arab Countries, Yemen; National Seminar on Women and the Reconstruction of Lebanon; Regional Working Group on Adolescent Maternity, Guyana and the Caribbean.

UNIDO: Workshop on Entrepreneurship for Women in Eastern European Countries, Vienna

FRENCH VERSION OF WIS NOW AVAILABLE

The Women's Information System (WIS) is the computerized bibliographic data bank operated by the Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Office at Vienna for use on IBM-compatible personal computers with MS-DOS.[2] It is an application of the computer software Mini-micro CDS/ISIS (Version 2.3)[3] of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

In 1991, the French Government provided funds to the Division for the translation of the WIS manuals into French. These, as well as new guidelines for networking and the exchange of data banks within the WIS network, are now available.

For free copies of the WIS software and manuals, as well as any further information, please contact WIS, Division for the Advancement of Women, at the address below (telefax 237495), specifying the size of diskette and language required.

APPEAL

The current double issue, No. 7/8, 1991, is the last to appear. From 1992, *Women 2000* will be expanded and issued five times a year. If sufficient funds are received, it is hoped to publish a new semi-annual bulletin covering preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace. Unfortunately, because of its extremely limited publications budget, the Division for the Advancement of Women is unable to commission photographers or to buy rights to reproduce photographs.

Readers who could make recent photographic material (preferably black and white) available free of charge are encouraged to send it to the Division. Credit will be given to the photographer and/or organization for any material that is published.

The topics to be covered by *Women 2000* will, in general, reflect the ongoing work of the Division, which is based mainly on the priority themes discussed by the Commission on the Status of Women at its annual sessions.

Notes

[1] United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 1990 (New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990).

[2] MS-DOS is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corporation.

[3] Computerized Documentation Systems/Integrated Set of Information Systems. (c) UNESCO 1989.

Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Office at Vienna, P.O. Box 500, A-1400 Vienna, Austria